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Report of the General Missionary for Alaska

Itinerary of the Interior

1917

Narrative

[by]

[James H. Condit]

PRESBYTERIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
520 WITHERSPOON BUILDING  
PHILADELPHIA 7, PA.



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Under two flags  
Interboundary Line  
Canada & U.S.

W.P. & Yukon R.R.

1917



In accordance with plans made a number of months previously, your General Missionary left Juneau, at noon on the first day of August, for an extensive itinerary of the interior of Alaska, in the interests of the Board of Home Missions. The day previous, the Rev. R.J. Diven, wife and son, passed through Juneau on their way to Nenana, where, according to previous plans, a mission was to be established. Mr. Diven, who had served the cause of Home Missions in Alaska before, both at Petersburg and Sitka, had been selected to undertake the new work at Nenana, because of his known qualifications for the Alaska work.

Your General Missionary overtook Dr. Diven and family at Skagway and from that place travelled with them all the way to Nenana.

On the way to Skagway our steamer called at Tee Harbor with cannery supplies. The cannery at this place had 43,000 cases of salmon already up and had tin for only 3,000 more cases although their traps were full of fish. I learned later on that all these fish in the traps were eventually turned loose because they could not be taken care of. In this war year it seems most unfortunate that they could not have been used.

We remained at Skagway one day. Our work at this place is in a most promising condition. At the meeting of Alaska Presbytery, called for the purpose, the Rev. L.H. Pedersen, who has served the Methodist church in Alaska for many years, and who is a man of fine character and qualifications for mission work, was received into the Presbyterian body. The Skagway church had already issued a call for his pastoral services. He was installed as pastor and is now serving our work in that capacity. One especial feature of the Skagway church is its live Sunday School. The services are well attended and the field receptive to the influences of our mission which is the only protestant organization in the town.

Our trip from Skagway to Dawson was without special incident. Contrary to experiences of the past there was plenty of water in Lake LaBarge and we passed through without difficulty. From White Horse to Fort Selkirk the country is of desert like formation with dry, barren, naked hills on either side. The sun was hot and the earth parched and dry. From White Horse clear to the lower Yukon the sun was shining every day. This was to your General Missionary a genuine treat after the continuous cold rains of the coast and his only regret was that those left behind might not share in the sunbath.

From Fort Selkirk on the country appears more fertile with abundant vegetation. Near the mouth of Stewart River a bear, feeding along the river, amused the passengers for a time, with his antics. He was entirely oblivious, apparently, to our presence, but was just as amusing as the black bear always is in captivity. All along the way we stopped at numberless wood piles for fuel. Steamers which had been converted to oil burners, because of war shortage of ~~fuel~~ fuel, were compelled to revert to wood. This gave the passengers ample opportunity to pick the abundant berries, raspberries, blue berries, cranberries, etc., etc., and also to wage battle with the mosquitoes which were as abundant as the berries, and, this year, more so than since the mind of man runneth not to the contrary.

We reached Dawson early on the morning of the sixth of August, three days from Skagway. This was on Monday morning and we did not get a boat down river until Saturday evening. There was much complaint, and to my mind justifiable, because of the delay. I had telegraphed from Juneau for word as to the boat sailings as had other passengers but had been unable to obtain any definite information. This was characteristic of the whole trip. The agents could give no definite word as to anything connected with the boat service. One simply sailed on the first boat available and waited at junction points until something turned up.



Green House, Dawson, Y.T.



Cabin of Robert Service, Dawson, Y.T.

Dawson is a deserted town. Its glory has departed. At one time 30,000 people lived here; today there are less than 2500. Many of the warehouses and store buildings have been torn down but many remain and together with the empty houses give a discouraged and forlorn aspect to the place.

We were very hospitably entertained by the pastor of the Canadian Presbyterian church, the Rev. Mr. Ross, and by some of his people, at dinner, on several occasions. The large Presbyterian church building is now much too large for its present congregation. The audience room has been divided by canvass so as to make a room of more appropriate dimensions. Mr. Ross has been in Dawson eight years. He does not expect conditions to better in so far as the church is concerned as there is no apparent promise of growth, but rather of the contrary, in the matter of population. The dredgers are cleaning up the gold remaining after the crude placer methods and when this is accomplished nothing will remain to sustain a population of any extent.

The thermometer stood as high as 86 degrees, ranging from that to 38 degrees, during our stay. Gardens and small farms were at their best. We bought very excellent ripe tomatoes at twenty-five cents per pound, which had been grown under glass. The flowers were never more beautiful nor more luxuriant than at Dawson. The one thing lacking is resources for population.

We finally sailed from the Klondike metropolis at 11 o'clock on Saturday evening on the steamer Alaska. We were given excellent rooms on the hurricane deck and enjoyed the beautiful scenery by the aid of perfect, sunny days, all the way to Fairbanks. As is the custom with these river boats we had several barges attached in front of our boat which were loaded to the limit with all kinds of supplies for the lower river. At one time as many as seven of these immense scows were lined up in front of us on the lower river. Cattle, hay, rail road supplies and general merchandise, constituted the greater part of our cargo. One can not but enjoy the skill manifested by the river men in manipulating these barges. Oftentimes I have thought that we were surely doomed to bring up on a bar, only to discover that by means of a carefully selected eddy, our captain was able to swing clear of all obstructions and incidentally to put his crafts many rods down stream on ~~on~~ their way.

We arrived at Eagle at 10:30 Sunday morning. Here we formerly sustained a mission during the days when a military post was maintained at this point. Since this was abandoned the white population has practically deserted the place and only a handful remain together with the Indians. The Episcopal church sustains the only religious work maintained here and gives its chief attention to the native work.

Sunday evening, just at dusk, we enjoyed the rather rare experience of beholding a large bull moose wading into the Yukon from a gravel bar and swimming across our bow to the opposite shore. He climbed the high bank in full view of the passengers and stood for a moment with his magnificent antlers held high in the air—plainly perplexed by the monster with belching smoke which floated so easily down with the current. Then, getting a whiff of the acrid smoke, he turned with that grace which is so singular a trait of these ungainly appearing animals, and melted away into the young birch trees with no apparent effort. While we were watching him he was gone and no one knew whither.

Circle was reached at 10 o'clock on Monday. Here we took on a pilot for the great Yukon flats and all day long were passing through the maze of channels characteristic of this stretch of the river. This is a favorite resort for wild fowl, ducks and geese, which breed here in large numbers. We were oftentimes amused by the behavior of the young wild geese. These birds, so wary in the late fall, at this season are young and unsophisticated. Far from the protecting undergrowth they would stand out on the mud flats until we had floated down to them and then make the most frantic efforts to reach cover by leg power alone as their wings had not yet developed more than down. We learned from the original sources the meaning of "goose step".

At 10 o'clock Monday night we arrived at Ft. Yukon. The place is famous for its dogs and fur. This point has the reputation of being the greatest fur trading camp in Alaska. The natives come down the Porcupine river from the

Steamer "Alaska" at Eagle, Alaska



"Attache" of Episcopal  
Mission, Eagle, Alaska.

far north, even McKenzie River Indians bringing their pelts here to trade for supplies. As to the dogs, there are all varieties. We were shown one fine looking huskey which had been brought from the blond Esquimaux region. He was a magnificent looking brute but gave no evidence of Saxon influence in his character.

An Episcopal mission with quite extensive hospital is maintained here. There are few white inhabitants.

At this point we were north of the Arctic circle.

The next day we stopped at Beaver long enough to unload fifteen steers which were to be driven over the trail, 160 miles, to the headwaters of the Kuyokuk river. In former years the same man who was taking in these beef animals had driven as many as 75 steers over this same trail. The population has so fallen off as to make the smaller number ample for all needs. During the day we completed the course of the Yukon flats. We were thirty-six hours floating down stream through these intricate water ways. The river at some points stretched out over an area of over twenty-five miles. It would be very easy to become hopelessly lost in these flats without a guide.

We passed by Rampart early in the morning of the 15th and reached Tanana at 10:30 the same morning.

There are about 150 soldiers at Ft. Gibbon, which is the military post located here. Aside from these there are about 150 additional white people. The Episcopal mission is located about a mile from the town on the banks of the river. Here is the native settlement with its very attractive looking church and other mission buildings. The minister in charge ~~here~~ also holds services in the town and a reading room is maintained in the log chapel which has been built for the white congregation.

At Rampart we took on board Prof. Georgeson, head of the Agricultural Experimental Stations of Alaska. Dr. Georgeson is much interested in a beardless barley which he is breeding at Rampart and which promises to be a very useful hardy grain for Alaskan conditions. He also has here a Siberian alfalfa which has withstood the winters of this severe climate and which, if it proves to be indeed a hardy variety, and capable of wintering in interior Alaska, will be of great value as a forage plant. In addition to these he is much encouraged over the successful wintering of a strawberry which he has bred by cross fertilization of domestic varieties with the wild Alaskan berry. The plants from this combination came through the past winter at both Rampart and Fairbanks in excellent condition, although exposed to the severe freezing weather without protection.

Dr. Georgeson is a most valuable man in Alaska and deserves great credit for his untiring efforts along the line of developing grains and plants adapted to the Alaskan conditions.

At Tanana we begin our journey up stream. With our load we make but three miles per hour. We have one barge of railroad iron and another of feed. The flats of the Tanana river, at the mouth, furnish but poor channels for steam boats of any draft. The bed of the stream is constantly changing and the pilot embarks on a voyage of discovery every time he makes a trip.

In the distance Mt. McKinley was visible for a good share of the day. This magnificent mountain, more than 20,000 feet high and the highest altitude on the western continent, is a land mark for travellers throughout all this region.

We reached Nenana, the first objective of this itinerary, early in the morning of the 18th of August. Dr. Forbes, of the Sunday School Board, who had been in Nenana for some six weeks, met us at the landing. Bills announcing services for the following day were circulated. I preached both morning and evening in the hall which Dr. Forbes had been using for services. There were good audiences at both meetings.

Rev. R.J.Diven, D.D.,  
and  
Mrs. Diven

Nenana, Alaska.



Potted plants at Nenana, Alaska,  
part of the decorations used at the public  
reception tendered the new missionaries.

At the evening service I baptized the infant son of Mr. and Mrs. Brevig, whom I had married at Fairbanks a number of years previously. I met many friends whom I had known in Fairbanks and elsewhere in Alaska.

On Monday, Dr. Diven and I took up the matter of a location for a church building. Dr. Forbes had selected and bought with money handed him by friends of church work, a lot which because of its location we felt would not at all meet the requirements of the case. It was on the edge of a swamp and itself on low ground, which during a period of high water a few weeks before, had been submerged to the depth of two feet. It was also out of the center of the town and not favorably located with respect to the residence portion of the place. We therefore decided that it would be necessary to buy elsewhere. We finally found a place which in our judgement could not be excelled for site and location, being in the block adjoining the public park, municipal buildings, and directly across from the site reserved for the public school building, which has since been erected. The only draw back was in the fact that we could only secure two-thirds of the lot but we determined to take this fractional lot in preference to a full lot in a less desirable place. To make the plan complete and to provide both living quarters and church auditorium on the somewhat limited ground space we decided to recommend that each of these needs be provided for under the same roof. Such a plan has since been drawn and a building erected so devised that later on, if thought desirable, it can be easily altered so that it may all be used for church purposes and a manse erected elsewhere.

We selected three men, from those most interested in the project, as a building committee, and were pleased to learn upon approaching them that all were not only willing to act in this capacity but did so gladly. The chairman of the committee, Dr. Smith, is the chief surgeon of the government hospital, and the son of a minister, Dr. Malcom Smith, recently deceased, who was well known about northern Michigan and Wisconsin and who contributed to our religious papers frequently as well as to other publications. The other two members are well known citizens, one a government engineer and the other proprietor of a rooming house. As at Anchorage, the Presbyterian church was the first at Nenana to locate a resident minister and erect a church edifice. The Catholics began their building at about the same time that we did. The Episcopalians have a lot but have done nothing as yet toward locating a minister or erecting a building. We found the citizens of the place well disposed toward our enterprise. The welcome extended was hearty and the response given to Mr. Diven's efforts have been most encouraging.

On Wednesday evening a public reception was tendered to Dr. Diven, Dr. Forbes and myself, at one of the leading hotels. The rooms were beautifully decorated with potted plants and flags, and refreshments served by the ladies. From eight o'clock until after eleven the people of the town came to extend a welcome to the representatives of the Presbyterian church. The officials of the government rail road were well represented as well as practically all the business and professional men of the town. It was a very pleasant affair and indicated a very cordial appreciation of our Board's efforts to provide for the spiritual needs of the community.

Nenana has a population of about 1500 people of whom approximately 600 are in the town itself and 900 along the line of the railroad. This will be the approximate population until the completion of the railroad. Afterwards, there will be fewer people, but because of its importance as the Yukon River terminus of the government railroad, and a distributing point for the entire interior section, the place will continue to be an important center and will have a stable population aside from the possibilities which the development of the resources of the section promises. There will be a town at the coal fields, which are some sixty miles from Nenana, and our representative at the latter point plans to keep in touch with this development as also to minister to the various camps along the line of the road. He has a large field for service.

Nenana is seventy-five miles from Fairbanks and is situated at the junction of the Tanana and Nenana rivers.

View on Main St.  
Nenana, Alaska



Congregation at  
first service con-  
ducted by  
Dr. Diven at  
Nenana, Alaska.

Railroad Iron  
at Nenana, Alaska,  
for Government  
Road.



Rev. Wallace S. Marple  
and  
Mrs. Marple, Fairbanks, Alaska



Pansies at Fairbanks, Alaska.



Presbyterian  
Church and Manse  
Fairbanks, Alaska



Sweet Peas  
Fairbanks, Alaska



Bridge over  
Tanana River  
Fairbanks, Alaska

On Friday the 24th of August, I left Nenana for Fairbanks. There being no steamer up river for several days I made the trip on a gasoline launch. Along the way were a number of ranches with extensive fields of oats, potatoes, and other garden products. We also observed a number of fox ranches. The growing of fur bearing animals promises to be an important business in this region. All along the way were fish wheels which provide the salmon used in feeding the foxes as well as food for the ever important dog teams. It is remarkable that the various kinds of salmon make their way up the Yukon river and its tributaries for thousands of miles and after their long journey through the fresh water are still in good condition for food for men and animals.

Our Mr. Marple met me at Fairbanks in the evening and took me to his hospitable home.

I preached morning and evening in my old pulpit and appreciated the opportunity of meeting many old friends. There were approximately forty people at the morning service and one hundred in the evening. The Sunday School attendance was eighty-five. There were ten young people at the Christian Endeavor meeting.

I cannot commend too highly the splendid work which Mr. and Mrs. Marple are doing at Fairbanks. They are giving themselves without reserve to their field and while finding conditions and work very different from that of their former important parish in New Jersey are meeting the new situation in just the way that people of their type of Christian consecration may be expected to do.

At the time of my visit there was no pastor in the Methodist church and the people of that congregation were uniting with our church in its work. I have just learned that the Methodist Board has sent a man to Fairbanks late this fall. This, to my mind, is an error much to be deprecated. Conditions in that camp do not now warrant the maintenance of two protestant churches so like in polity and faith as the Methodist and Presbyterian. I sincerely hope that the Methodist Board will deem it expedient to conserve mission funds by withdrawing their man from the Fairbanks field. One church can and ought to be alone responsible at this stage of the camp for its religious work.

Fairbanks is on the decline. The placer ground of the surrounding creeks is now worked out, practically, and there is little promise of support of any but a small community from other resources. At the present high cost of labor and supplies there will be very little done in the interior, in a mining way, until after the end of the war. All boats from the interior were crowded this fall. It is generally conceded that the population of the interior will be less this coming year than for many years. What bearing this will have on our future work can only be known by developments. Certainly, until the war is ended, there will be no call for advance steps in this section of Alaska.

At the services on Sunday Mr. Marple suggested that our new Nenana missionaries would doubtless appreciate some Fairbanks fruit and vegetables and I was rash enough to suggest that I would be pleased to carry their gift down river to Mr. Diven on my return. After the evening service we had, all told, two large gunny sacks of choice vegetables, peas, carrots, potatoes, cabbage, celery, tomatoes, turnips, etc., etc., and in addition a cream case full of jellies, preserves, and canned fruit. I delivered all the aforesaid to Mr. and Mrs. Diven according to contract, but did not carry the load with my hand baggage as I had planned. The steamboat people were good enough to frank the shipment through to Nenana and the kindness of the Fairbanks friends was much appreciated by the new missionaries.

I left for down river points Monday evening, the twenty-seventh. After a short stop at Nenana I proceeded on down river and reached Tanana again on Wednesday. Here I met Judge Bunnell, district judge with headquarters at Fairbanks, and enjoyed the hospitality of himself and wife at dinner. On Thursday I left Tanana on the Sarah and reached Ruby the following day. The chief feature of this trip was the innumerable swarms of mosquitoes and black flies which greeted us at all landing places.



Presbyterian Chapel, Ruby, Alaska.



Ruby, Alaska, and the Yukon River

At Ruby we have a small building which was erected for a store building, originally, and afterwards purchased by the Rev. Mr. Bradshaw, who served as missionary at this place for three years, for church purposes. It is a small, cheap, one story affair, and of little value. It is situated on the river bank on the lower side of the main street and the back part of the building had settled during the last high water so that the floor sagged badly. No one seemed to have any particular responsibility for the care of the chapel. I found the front door unlocked and furnishings in disorder. The building contains home made benches (which had been borrowed and not returned) a Bilhorn Folding Organ, singing books, a large stove, and not much else.

On Sunday I held service in the evening and had a full house. The offering was \$16.75. I used this money to repair the building by putting a new lock on the door, repairing the benches, putting in broken glass, etc. etc. After these repairs I had a balance of \$6.75 which I turned over to Mr. A.J. Dayton, together with the keys to the building. Mr. Dayton agreed to take care of the building. I instructed him to use this balance together with other funds to be collected locally in raising the building at the rear and putting it in shape.

As Dr. Forbes had no other work in view I proposed that he go to Ruby for a while and hold services and otherwise care for that field for the present. He is on the ground at the time of this report (November 13) and is holding services and will probably continue there until spring.

I do not believe that there are more than 300 people in the entire Ruby district at this time. Also, there is no promise for the future, at least at the present. New discoveries may be made, but even so, nothing will be done until conditions are again normal. No other denomination has ever attempted work here.

Ruby is on the Yukon river, one-hundred and sixty miles below Tanana and the junction of the Tanana and Yukon rivers.

I left Ruby for Nome on Saturday the eighth of September.

It is seven-hundred and thirty-eight miles from Ruby to the mouth of the Yukon river. The river boats give little attention to passengers as the one great concern of the transportation companies is to get the freight up the river from St. Michael before navigation closes. The season is short and the order of the day is rush, rush, rush! Passengers are transferred from the smaller to the larger boats as we proceed down stream. Loaded barges are brought up with each steamer and passed on to the smaller boats which turn and proceed up stream. From Tanana to St. Michael I travelled on four different boats.

The lower Yukon is monotonous in the extreme. The boat makes its way through one of many channels as the river spreads over much country. From the deck one sees nothing but one great flat after another. There are but few settlements and none of much importance. Timber becomes more and more scarce until trees disappear entirely and for days we sailed through treeless tundra. At Nome I saw children seven and eight years old who had never seen a tree.

On the beach, some seventy or eighty miles this side of St. Michael, I observed a boat being built. As we passed I noted that it was of excellent model and was probably twenty-five to thirty feet long. It was being constructed near a pile of drift wood. A passenger, who came on board here, told me that it was being constructed by an Esquimaux. His only supply of lumber was from the pile of drift. He whip-sawed the boards from the drift logs on the beach and in the face of such conditions of supply and labor was building a boat which would have been a credit to any boat carpenter with normal supplies and conditions. Such industry and skill are worthy of notice.

At Tanana I saw a man sleeping in a chair in a room which was combination reading room, billiard hall, saloon, barber shop, etc., etc. As I was sitting in the barber chair I noticed a roll of bills fall from his pocket which loss he was too much intoxicated to note. The proprietor picked the money up and arousing the



Railroad Commission  
Buildings,  
Nenana, Alaska



Native Village  
and  
Episcopal School a  
and Church  
Tanana, Alaska



Labor Temple  
Anchorage, Alaska

The Tundra  
St. Michael,  
Alaska.



St. Michael,  
Alaska.



Esquimaux  
Bidarka

man gave him the money and told him to take care of it. Later on I noticed this same man working as a deck hand to pay his passage to St. Michael. He was bruised and battered and bemoaning his fate in that he had "lost" all his money.

From a lawyer on board I learned that at one time he had \$23,000 in the bank at Dawson. This was in the year 1898. In 1900 he was penniless and today is a physical and moral wreck. In conversation with him I could get no farther than that he had "rotten luck"!

On the north bank of the Yukon, not far from the mouth of the Koyukuk river, appears a large white cross. It marks the ~~last~~ spot where Bishop Sager, of the Catholic Diocese of Vancouver, who in the winter of 1882 was making a missionary journey, was murdered by his travelling companion, a man named Fuller. Fuller afterwards brought a party of men to the spot and the body was taken to St. Michael and from there outside. It is supposed that the murderer was insane.

At Anvik an Episcopal mission is sustained and has been for many years in charge of the Rev. John Chapman. There is a large native village here.

Many native boys work on the river steamers as deck hands and give excellent service.

At Holy Cross is a large Catholic Mission. We passed this interesting place in the night.

We reached Marshall on the tenth of September. This is one of the newest mining camps. There are some 500 people in this district. I noted a shipment of eleven, fifty gallon barrels of whiskey, on board, consigned to one saloon keeper of this town. There were other large shipments of liquor going down the river. Inasmuch as the territory goes dry on January 1st, 1918, the inference is that great quantities of liquor are being stored and will doubtless be heard from next year as disturbing sources of violation of the prohibition law.

Marshall is but two years old. It produced some \$500,000 of gold this year and \$250,000 the year previous. No religious work has been done at this point. Considerable prospecting will be done here this winter. The known pay ground is pretty well worked out. Should new discoveries be made, as seems quite likely, there will be a field here for religious work when normal conditions are restored, after the war.

We reached the mouth of the Yukon on September 12th. A high wind was prevailing and we lay at anchor until the evening of the 13th as the captain would not take his boat out to sea until more moderate weather appeared. There is a stretch of some twenty miles of open sea from the mouth of the Yukon to St Michael and river boats should not, by rights, attempt this passage. A serious accident will doubtless occur here should the present method of running river boats over this stretch continue. Our delay was made somewhat trying owing to the fact that we ran short of provisions. There was no meat on board and no fresh vegetables, eggs, or fruit. We managed on tinned supplies.

The weather having moderated we made St Michael the evening of the thirteenth.

Here we were fated to remain until the evening of the nineteenth, waiting for the Victoria which had been delayed by an accident.

The one business of St. Michael is getting freight up the river. This year, on account of the great tonnage being sent up river for the government railroad, the rush was more marked than usual. Several hundred men are employed here during the summer. In winter there are but a handful of white men, aside from the natives, Esquimaux, of whom there are several hundred. There is here, also, an army post, but with less than one-hundred and fifty men at present.

There are a number of interesting relics of the past at this point. I noted the original log building, erected by the Russian Fur Co., in 1833, in which this company began operations at this point. A brass plate on the front gives the date of erection. I also noted two old block houses with the marks of bullets indicating that they had been in a state of siege at some time.



View along the line of the  
Government Railroad, near  
Kern Creek, Alaska.



Depot at Seward, Government Railroad, Alaska.

But one hotel is maintained at St Michael. The management is quite independent in its administration of this hostelry. You are informed that the rate is \$3.50 per day. You may have three meals if you so chose or less if you prefer. But the rate is the same. Also, you may not have a room alone as the management expects that each ~~man~~ room shall accomodate two men. Remonst rance is all in vain. It is a case of take what we have , or, go without.

On Sunday I attended the services of the Orthodox Greek Church, the only church in the place. It happened that the Bishop of Alaska was in charge. There were about sixty natives present and they represented all grades of civilization from the interpreter, who is employed at the company's store, wears store clothes and speaks good English, to the so-journer from a far contry in his reindeer parka, muck-a-lucks, simplicity, and fish odor. The services consisted of the usual chanting, bowing, crossing, etc., etc. The people seemed to be reverent but I could but wonder what real spiritual benefit came from what seemd to me to be very meaningless form. The service lasted for two hours and the audience stood during the entire meeting. The impresions remaining after the service were of swinging incense pots, genu-flection, many highly colored pictures of saints and apostles, a much berobed church dignitary, and on the other hand an assemblage of simple minded Esquimaux, in their poverty both of body and spirit, groping after the light but not attaining thereto.

The question of the future of the Greek Church in Alaska is interesting. Support from Russia is now cut off, in large measure. There will doubtless be no farther state support of the church at home or abroad. I attempted to get an expression from the Bishop as to this but failed as he understood no English. But the interpreter told me that it was expected that the churches in Russia and elsewhere would support their missions by voluntary contributions as other churches did. I very much doubt whether there will be an adequate support for Alaskan missions from this source. It will doubtless follow that many of their missions, especially in isolated places, will be abandoned. In the Bristol Bay region, for example, which I visited for the Home Board three years ago, no priest has been sent to take the place of the last missionary, who died during the year. In that region there are now several thousand Esquimaux without priest or preacher. Undoubtedly a new responsibility of evangelization in Alaska is upon the Protestant churches. Will our Presbyterian Church arise to the condition of need?

I learned while in St. Michael that the Methodist Woman's Missionary Society of the western coast is pñanning to locate a mission at Nunivak Island. I sincerely trust that this will be accomplished. There are several thousand Esquimaux at the mouth of the Kuskokwim and in the delta region between the Kuskokwim and Yukon rivers who at present are not being reached by any evangelical church. The spiritual need is very great here. Our Bureau of Education is establishing schools among these people but they need, also, the ministration of the church, in order to their complete developement. I hope that our Presbyterian church will be in a position to take its share of the burden of the evangelization of this people.

We left for Nome on Wednesday, the nineteenth of September. From Nome down the boat was crowded. There were three men in the room I occupied and some had four occupants. All boats out have been crowded this fall indicating the great immigration from the interior. The population of Alaska for next year promises to be much less ~~for next year~~ than for a number of years previous.

All freight at Nome is landed by means of lighters as on account of the shallow water wharves are impossible. We were at anchor at Nome for two days. Our boat was at all times boarded by many Esquimaux with their ivory articles for sale. They were there from all nearby points. I saw representatives from St Lawrence Island, King's Island, Golovin Bay. etc., etc. Our passengers bought hundreds of dollars worth of ivory cribbage boards, Billikens, buttons, paper knives, parkas, and other curios, and found the Esquimaux traders to be very keen business men and women. The question always was not what is it worth, but "how much you give?"



Washout on the Railroad  
Helping the hand car across  
Travelling under(or over)  
difficulties.



Kern Creek Road House

At Nome there are two English Protestant churches, one under the auspices of the Episcopal church and the other a federated church under joint control of the Methodist and Congregational Societies. The latter churches furnish the missionary in rotation. Just now the missionary in charge is from the Congregational Society. In addition there is now a mission for Esquimaux at Nome under the care of a Methodist missionary. The Methodist church also sustains a work at Sinuk, north of Nome.

We sailed from Nome at five o'clock of the afternoon of the 22nd of September. The Victoria had two bars in operation and intoxicated men were common on board. Gambling was also carried on between decks and a number of the men coming out from Nome and the interior were the losers to the card sharps who ran the games. The Steam Ship Company is to be censured for permitting such swindling on board.

As we were leaving Nome a poor intoxicated Swede who got on board in that condition fell down the hatch way, twenty-four feet, and fractured his skull. He died soon after he was taken ashore. To one of the passengers he had stated that when he came to Alaska he did not know the taste of intoxicants. He said, "when I get down to Seattle I am through with whiskey" He was through with it and all other temptations within ten minutes. One of the waiter boys, who was standing by me when the poor victim to alcohol was lowered from the boat, said, more to himself than to any one else, for no one was near him, "damn the whiskey". And I mentally responded, "amen".

We made the fifteen hundred miles from Nome to Seward in five days. The first part of the voyage was rough and most of the passengers were quite seasick. As we were out in the open ocean until close to Seward there was no incident of note to observe or record. The weather was favorable and the passage quite comfortable.

We arrived at Seward on the twenty-seventh of September.

The Methodist church at this place is supplied by the Rev. Mr. Patton, formerly of Fairbanks. In addition, there is an Episcopal church, which until recently has been vacant. The Rev. Mr. Zim, expects to move to Seward soon from Valdez, and at the time of my visit was in Seward superintending the building of a rectory which is located on the same lot with the church edifice.

A recent flood wrecked the Christian church which was built about a year ago and the minister in charge has apparently abandoned the field and country.

On the next day I left for Anchorage. From Seward to Kern Creek I travelled by the Government railroad. Through the kindness of the Seward superintendent of construction I rode on his private car for thirty-five miles but the rest of the way we made our way journey on gasoline cars, hand cars, and on foot, covering all together seventy-five miles. Floods had recently torn out the road bed in many places and so upset the grade that it will be impossible to run trains through to Kern Creek this winter.

We made the last twenty miles by moon light, travelling on a gasoline "speeder". For the last ten miles we had to be on the lookout constantly for porcupines, out for their usual nocturnal stroll and following the line of least resistance in their travels, which happened to be the rail road track. The danger was that in running over one of them we might derail the car.

Arriving at the Kern Creek roadhouse after ten o'clock we found the proprietor so sound asleep that we had difficulty in arousing him. He finally appeared and put us to bed in home made bunks which he, a good sailor, had constructed of rope and spruce uprights fresh from the virgin forest. The whole house was fresh from the woods with the exception of the floors, doors and windows. The fare was homely and the house was rude but the hospitality was without blemish even if the blankets were not.

The little gasboat, "Kumback" did not come back until Sunday morning. By aid of the staunch little craft we made Anchorage, through the dreaded Turnagain Arm, by the middle of the afternoon. The tide rushes into this arm of

Rev. James L. McBride  
Anchorage, Alaska.

Cooks Inlet with a velocity and depth unknown elsewhere in Alaska, or for that matter in any other place except the Bay of Fundy. Consequently, Turnagain Arm, is the terror of mariners and has caused many a boat to "turn again".

We found Mr. McBride, our successful missionary at Anchorage, with arrangements made for an evening observance of the Lord's Supper. I gave the communion address and assisted in the Sacraments. The church was filled. Eighteen new members were received into fellowship, one infant baptized and an elder ordained. The Sunday School is one of the largest and best conducted in Alaska. A young people's society has been organized, there are all the organizations of a well conducted church in the states. On Wednesday evening there were fifteen present at the mid-week meeting. The buildings and property have been improved, and the plant presents a most attractive appearance, on its corner, in one of the best locations in the city and near to the main streets. Recently the Anchorage church placed ninety bibles in the hotels of the city, under the leadership of a representative of the Gideons.

Anchorage has made great improvement within the last year. Concrete walks have been laid on the main street for a distance of eleven blocks which are twelve feet wide. Many large and attractive buildings have been constructed. The present population is close to 5,000 but this takes in the railroad employees.

The people fully expect that the development of the mining properties adjacent to the town and the exploiting of the Matanuska coal together with the farming interests will sustain a town of the present size after the rail road is completed. I look, however, for a decided slump after the completion of the road. I am convinced that the whole thing is over done. There are too many stores and too many houses and far too much territory covered by the present town site. But, after this is said, there will certainly be a good small city here. As a Mission enterprise we have not overdone. Our building is modest and adequate and inasmuch as we occupy the field, practically without competition, there will be in the future a field for us and a good work to be done here.

Mr. and Mrs. McBride are very much loved in Anchorage. Mr. McBride has a part in pretty much everything going on which makes for civic welfare or public morals. He is a very competent and useful missionary. As a preacher he is much above the average.

In addition to our church there is a Congregational work which is not intended by its pastor to be along regular lines. He has made an appeal to the working element and nominates himself as a labor leader. I fear that he is attempting to lead the laboring man without a proper presentation of the Carpenter's Son. At all events, as at present organized, this work does not in any way interfere with our organization. I have referred to this church and to certain apparent comity complications in a previous letter.

One of Mr. McBride's elders, Mr. O.A. Kenyon, is the Secretary of the rail road Y.M.C.A., and is a valuable worker and helper.

Our work here and elsewhere, notably at Nenana, will be affected by the attitude of the Government toward the completion of the rail road. The road will cost more than the estimate. Because of war conditions all materials and labor will cost much more than at first anticipated. There is a disquieting rumor that no appropriation will be made, at the coming Congress, for the completion of the work. Also, that work will be suspended until after the war. Should this occur both Anchorage and Nenana will be hard hit. We can only await developments.

Mr. McBride and I left Anchorage on Saturday the sixth of October for Cordova to attend the annual meeting of the Yukon Presbytery, and reached the latter place late in the evening of the ninth.

We passed LaTouche and Valdez on the way. The former is a Copper property owned by the Guggenheims and under the same management as the famous Copper River property at Kennicott. There have been many improvements at LaTouche



Public School Building Anchorage

POLICY BOND

Rev. A.G. Shriver  
and  
Mrs. Shriver  
Cordova, Alaska

including the building of some twenty cottages for workmen. There is now a community of families and a public school. Our Mr. Shriver has been reaching the place with help for the Sunday School there but aside from this no mission work is being done. This is one of the places which calls for mission work.

At Valdez the Congregational church has the field. Valdez is much depleted in population and financial standing.

The Yukon Presbytery convened on the ninth of October with but three members in attendance, all that could be present. I will cover the Presbytery meeting in a later report to the Board.

Cordova has improved in appearance and business since last year. The large shipments of copper ore passing through this port has had something to do with the prosperity of the town. But there have also been erected a number of canneries and clam canning plants which furnish employment to a number of people.

Mr and Mrs. Shriver are doing a good work in Cordova. I spoke at the prayer meeting service on Wednesday evening. There were sixteen present. The Sunday School has more than doubled in membership. This is also true of the church attendance. Cordova is a very hard field for religious work and Mr. Shriver is giving himself unreservedly to his parish. He is a hard worker, very much in earnest, evangelical and a man of prayer.

The work here is much hampered by the location of the church building. It is situated on the top of a steep hill. In winter the people must have the zeal for God's house very strong in their hearts ~~if they will~~ be willing to climb that hill through the snow. For the past several years a room has been rented down town for church services during the winter. The attendance has been doubled by so doing. The work at Cordova will never be what it might be and what it ought to be until the church is put down on the level of the main part of the town and within more attainable reach of the people. This is a proposition which the Board must face soon. It is a condition of the effectiveness of our Cordova work.

In company with Mr. Shriver I left Cordova on Friday, over the Copper River Railroad, for the fields which Mr. Shriver visits, contiguous to Cordova. By the courtesy of the rail road management we were given free transportation.

We reached Kennicott at five o'clock in the evening. Mr. E.T. Stannard, manager of the Guggenheim properties in Alaska, took us to the guest house and entertained us royally. He had arranged a dinner in our honor with some of his staff as invited guests. It was rather a surprise to sit down to an elaborate, six course dinner, here in the midst of the mountains of the great Copper mine of Alaska and likewise one of the greatest copper mines of the world. Mr. Stannard, although a young man, is one of the authorities on copper mining. He has perfected a system, practically his own, by which through a "leaching process" thousands of dollars are saved annually which formerly was not recovered.

At the evening service, held in the recreation hall, there were 35 present. I preached at this service and found afterwards that I had in my audience two Yale graduates, one Ann Arbor University, one Boston Tech., and one University of Pennsylvania. This is an index to the new method in mining in Alaska which calls for the best talent available. No preacher without something to say need apply for an audience among the mines of Alaska.

Mr. Shriver is much appreciated along the line of the railroad. He has his hands on the situation, is looking after the spiritual and intellectual welfare of the communities along the road and is specially adapted to this kind of work. I heard from Mr. Stannard and others words of warmest commendation for him and his work.

On Saturday evening we held services at Chitina with seventeen present.

There are at present four communities along the line of the Copper River road which Mr. Shriver is reaching -- Kennicott, 700; McCarthy, 300; Strelma, 100; Chitina, 100; total population, 1200. There are Sunday Schools at Kennicott, 15; McCarthy, 10; Chitina, 12, totals scholars, 37.

I preached at Cordova on Sunday evening with an attendance of 40.

I left Cordova on Monday morning, the fifteenth of October and arrived at Juneau the following evening at nine o'clock. I was absent two and one-half months and travelled a total of 6,077 miles. In my itinerary I travelled by ocean steamer, railroad, river steamer, gas boat, rail-road "speeder", hand car, push car, automobile and on foot.

The expense of the trip, a report of which I have already submitted, was much lessened by the courtesy of the White Pass officials who gave me a berth and meal rate the entire length of the Yukon river.

In this itinerary I travelled the entire length of the Yukon and visited all of the missions of the Presbytery of Yukon excepting that at Point Barrow. This was the first visit that any representative of our Board has made, officially, to Fairbanks, Nenana, Ruby, Kennicott and Chitina.

It was a matter of regret to me that I could not visit the Iditarod country although I had a special rate to that point. On account of the lateness of my getting away I did not have time to make this visit and get out to Nome in time to catch the September sailing of the Victoria.

In this connection I may say that there are about 1,000 people in the Iditarod District in the summer time. In winter the majority leave for the outside. The Guggenheims now control practically all the district and are working the ground by the dredging process. It is their intention to complete their work next year. It is possible that they will not be able to do this in one more season but when they do complete their work the camp will be practically deserted.

I have advised Dr. Forbes to go to the Iditarod after he leaves Ruby. It is his present intention to do so.

Respectfully submitted,

James H. Condit,  
General Missionary.

